Cover

THE FEATHERS

A TALE.

THE FEATHERS, A TALE;

OR,

VENUS SURPASSED

BY A

BEAUTY IN GROSVENOR SQUARE.

INSCRIBED TO

A CERTAIN FAIR PLUMED DUTCHESS.

SUM PLUMOSA DEA.

You'll see the Fair, where'er you go,
Tho' taper and thin as a lath, Sir,
With Feathers nodding to and fro',
Like plumed Knights of the Bath, Sir.——

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THE FEATHERS

A TALE.

IN Java's Iſland on the China ſeas,
Bantam, or Lilliput, or what you pleaſe,
Boaſts of a tiny, fairy race of men,
And eke the little cock and little hen:
But then, this little hen and little cock,
Spring from an ancient and a mettled ſtock.
Gallant and gay the cock he leads the train,
And crows, and flaps his wings and crows again:

The ſpunk appears where e'er the Bantam goes,
Who wears his feathers to his very toes.
He ſtruts, he cocks his tail and ſhakes his creſt,
Spreads out his painted wings, and ſhews his golden breaſt.
Theſe range at large and pick the various ſeed,
And bleſt with liberty luxurious feed.
Not ſo the caſe of thoſe fair fav'rite hens,
Cribb'd, cabbin'd and confin'd in narrow pens;
Where all their pretty plumage ſoon is ſpoil'd,
Unſorted, unanointed and unoil'd.
Their feathers ruffled, pale's the roſy comb,
Without the gariſh ſun, no beauties bloom:
Beaſt, fiſh, and birds the glorious truth approve,
The bliſs of earth is liberty and love.

There is a feather'd rule of Turkiſh ſort,
One cock's allow'd with ſeven hens to ſport:

Large

Large the allowance be they great or ſmall,
One little cock, — ye cocks! to feather all!
Alas! poor cock—reply'd a neighbouring ſwain,
Alas! poor hens,—a maid repeats again!

But cuſtom's all in this or other land,
The cocks obey the hens in all command.
But can the hens command an old Cock-Turk,
Eat up with ſloth, to do his daily work?
Who, for his roupy rump leaves walk and food,
And brooding keeps his perch in ſulky mood:
Ne'er moves his head to ſhew his turband creſt,
Nor to the ſun diſplays his burniſh'd breaſt:
Ne'er ſeeks the grain to pleaſe dame Partlet's lip,
But droops his feathers, and declares the pip.
In ſuch a caſe, ſhall not theſe beauteous hens,
Break all reſtraints of tethers, roofts, and pens,

Liſt to the voice of neighbouring Chanticleer,
And ſpread their ſilver plumage without fear:
O'er higheſt walls advent'rous raiſe their wings,
And feather with the neareſt cock that ſings?
" Encreaſe and multiply the prophet ſaid! "
What eggs bring chickens, and the cocks not tread!

It was an antient philoſophic rule,
Allow'd by all the maſters of the ſchool;
That human-nature more or leſs in all,
Reſembles the creation animal.
But ladies, who eccentrically bound,
O'er ev'ry doctrine moral, ſage, or ſound;
Are not content with looking like a jay,
But they muſt dreſs as lightly and as gay:
Nay, ev'ry tail, of ev'ry bird they rob,
And with the lighteſt feathers wing the nob;

Like

Like horſes move in the funereal train
Beneath their plumes, and ſhake the plaited mane.
Now, ſince to ornament the frolic fair,
There's not one pretty bird whoſe rump's not bare;
Do not the ladies more or leſs appear,
Juſt like the birds whoſe various plumes they wear?
The *wry-neck*, *wag-tail* yellow, white and grey,
The *ruff*, the *reeve*, the *ſparrow* and the *jay*;
Do they not like the pretty *ring-doves* coo,
And what the *cuckow* only ſays,—make true?
The *pin-tail*, *red-ſhank*, *red-ſtart* and *egret*,
Are cloſely copied by miſs Mol and Bet.—
We've 'mongſt the belles the *ring-tail* and the *owl*,
Something between a female and a fowl;
We've *coddy-moddy gulls*, and *buzzards* too,
Fair ſilver *geeſe*, and *parrots* green and blue:
Silk-tails and *red-poles* ev'ry where appear,
And belles are *humming birds* in ev'ry ear.

Is it a wonder then, that they ſhould dreſs,
Like thoſe fair birds, whoſe names they all expreſs!

What, in creations mighty various round,
Than beauteous birds, more beautiful is found?
The ſwan's majeſtick form once courted Jove,
To dreſs in ſilver white, and Leda * love:
When Juno o'er the thund'rer would prevail,
She wears the plumage of her *peacock's* tail:
Minerva too demands her fav'rite fowl,
And for a mark of wiſdom bears the owl!
While beauteous Venus, miſtreſs of the loves,
Yokes to her car the ſparrows and the doves:
From theſe the pretty, painted Pagan dames,
To creſts of feathers laid their ancient claims;
Thus with their wings they roſe to Heav'ns abodes,
Or with their charms drew down the ſterneſt Gods.

* When Leda the lovely grew weary of Man,
And Paſiphæ broke her ſtrong Tether:
Though the laſt took a Bull—and the firſt lov'd a Swan,
It was all for the Sake of the Feather.

Such

Such was the ancient taſte of claſſic dames,
Whom few might know, ſhould I recount their names:
But yet, with all their elegance and grace,
The firſt in faſhion and the firſt in face,
The heavenly Goddeſſes and women too,
The *Oſtrich* feather, DUTCHESS, left to you:
To beauteous thee, this plumage they reſign'd,
And though the laſt—the firſt of woman kind.
Hail to the myſtic feathers of the fair,
Such as the *Devonſhire* and *Sefton* wear:
Hail to the myſtic feathers red, white, blue.
Of beauteous *Bouverie*, and courteous *Crewe*;
Hail to the myſtic black from wing of raven,
The contraſt ornament of *Stanley*, *Craven*:
And thoſe more elegant than all the reſt,
Which ſtately nod o'er lively *Boſville*'s breaſt:
And tho' for tender *Aſgyl* ſome declare,
Thour't not leſs elegant, if ſhe's more fair.

Hail

Hail to the party robe each belle aſſumes,
Each tempting goldfinch, and her fleecy plumes!
Hence tulip hide thy variegated head,
Thy white, green, yellow, purple, blue, and red;
Thy various colours, are alas! undone,
Feathers and wax-lights blacken thee and ſun.

Ye little Gods! ye Goddeſſes of ſky,
Who make up Lady Juno's rout on high;
Come and attend our faſhionable crouds,
And velvet chairs prefer to cold, wet clouds!
Thus, 'tis ungentlewoman-like to ſwim,
And with a diſh-clout damp the fattin limb:
Here, here deſcend, cut entre-chats and capers,
Nor paſs eternity in clouds and vapours!
To live in fog and miſt muſt be a ſin,
And ſuch a clime muſt raiſe the price of gin!

Come,

Come, come, to Grosv'nor square, ye prudent few,
And *Hebe* be, sweet handmaid unto *Crewe*.

When first I paid my pleasing visit there,
The belles had search'd the earth, the woods, the air,
For fancy feathers to adorn the hair.
Warren a goddess mov'd beneath her plume,
And added dignity to ev'ry room:
So fine, so feather'd, furbelow'd and fair,
They seem'd a *menag'rie* of fowls most rare:
I gaz'd a while—and then their forms rever'd,
They all like birds of Paradise appear'd.
Sturtz and the *Vernons* seem'd amidst the croud,
Like angels lighted from some fleecy cloud;
To soften, model, and refine our race,
And teach us—nature's worship—beauty's face.

Venus enrag'd to ſee ſuch routs below,
Leap'd naked from her bed as white as ſnow,
And in a paſſion made this pettiſh vow.
With me, preſumptive ſhall theſe dare to vie,
And match their charms with beauties of the ſky:
By Heav'ns in all the plumes of Jove I'll dreſs,
Rip up his feather beds from eaſt to weſt.
His pillows too I'll ſcatter thro' the ſkies,
Pluck Juno's bird, and ſcratch out Gany's eyes;
Rob Merc'ry's head and foot, ſteal Mars's plume,
And then defy the gay *Feſtino* room.
I with their charms and plumage will be even,
Of ſilver *Jerſey* and the golden *Devon*;
I'll have the longeſt feather of the throng,
Though *Stormont* gave her one twelve inches long.
As for the crimſon *Archer* and Miſs *Weſt*,
With them I'll ſoon quit ſcore dreſs'd or undreſt,
Although they truely paint the moſt, and beſt.

The

The Iriſh Graces* too ſhall own my ſway,
And brilliant *Matthews* croſs her turgid ſea:
Newnham, though angel born, the men ſhall hate her,
And *Stanley* make in vain a Féte Châmpetre!
Barrymore's lips, and *Craven*'s heavenly ſmile,
Shall loſe their pow'r, like G—l—r and A—r—g—e.
Fret, ſcold, and ſcratch—lay all your heads together
But Venus, girls, will have the longeſt feather.

Cupid, dear boy, go hence and yoke the doves,
Call up the graces and the little loves:
Then, with young Gany ſearch the high abodes,
And bring me all the feathers of the Gods!
That o'er theſe dames your mother may prevail;
I'll be all feathers, ſon, from head to tail!
Gany and Cupid pleas'd with this new Jeſt,
Thro' Heav'n they ſtole the feathers of each neſt.

And

* Lady Townſend and her two Siſters.

And when a *monſtruous* bundle they had found,
Gany on *Cupid*'s back the plumage bound.
The God equip'd he darted thro' the air.
The rendez-vous was *Crewe*'s in Groſvenor Square.
Whether elated with ideal joy,
Or nectar had beguil'd the giddy boy;
'Tis hard, and even hazardous to ſay,
However, Maſter Cupid loſt his way:
Inſtead of coming as his mother ſaid,
The purblind urchin flew to *Boſville*'s bed:
Where like mamma, the heaven-born beauty laid,
And undeceiv'd he watch'd the ſleeping maid.
Her roſy cheeks the downy pillow preſt,
The ſheet unkindly hid the fairer breaſt;
Her hands alone were naked to the air,
But who durſt ſleeping, ſpotleſs virtue bare?
Where maiden chaſtity takes ſweet repoſe,
Whether beneath the foreſt or the clothes,

Her

Her honour's ſafe, for ſuch is virtue's power,
No Satyr dares approach the ſacred flower;
Vice and pollution fly before he her breath,
To them the hallow'd atmoſphere is death.

Cupid deceiv'd by beauty ſits and ſings,
Lolls in the elbow chair, and ſmooths his roſy wings:
And while mamma lies weary with her trip,
The boy he meditates a truant ſlip;
Down ſtairs he marches, nor a ſoul regards,
More than an unfleg'd enſign of the guards.
The maiden wakes, ſhe rings, ſhe longs to ſpeak,
And ſhews the dream upon her crimſon cheek:
Betty comes in—the pleaſing tale ſhe tells,
" How ſhe'll ſurpaſs in feathers all the belles!
O madam, Betty cries, your dream is out,
We've feathers for a funeral or a rout;

All your admirers now, may be your Knights,
And wear your plumes at *Windſor* and at *White*'s
You may ſurpaſs the damſels of the town,
And have an Inſtallation of your own.
Here, madam here, look with your own bright eyes,
At ſuch a time, this is a glorious prize:
When in this black and ſnowy, chilly weather,
There's not a duck—or gooſe can keep a feather!
Betty, ſhe cries, as from her bed ſhe ſprings,
Theſe are imperial plumes, and worthy kings.
This night your miſtreſs ſhall theſe feathers bear,
And o'er her ſex a Goddeſs ſhe'll appear.
At that, ſhe caſt her ſnowy robe aſide,
Nor Helen fairer, when the Trojan bride.
As quick as thought with garments ſhe is grac'd,
And Venus, ceſtu's binds her taper waiſt.
Upon her head the plumes compoſe a creſt,
And ſhe at once a Goddeſs ſtands confeſt.

This may to human eyes a myſt'ry ſeem,
But Gods at pleaſure realize a dream.
A thouſand ſprights attend on maids and men,
At once inviſible to mortal ken:
A thouſand faries wait the beauteous maid,
And lead her forth in heavenly veſts array'd:
At *Crewe*'s ſhe moves with ev'ry Cyprian air,
Confeſt by all the faireſt of the fair.
Venus, unnotic'd mixes in the croud,
And calls her little, naſty boy aloud.
The boy diſcovers by his mother's face,
His hapleſs error, and her ſad diſgrace.
Whimp'ring he kneels, a little purblind rake,
And begs her pardon for the ſad miſtake;
Sobbing, he cries, "Forgive, forgive me do;
Mother, indeed I took the maid for you:
But leſt again I run on ſuch a ſhelf,
Pray make no more as handſome as yourſelf.

FINIS.